

**FINANCE COMMITTEE****Town of Grafton**

30 Providence Road

Grafton, MA 01519

(508) 839-5335 x 1167

www.grafton-ma.gov

Saturday, March 29, 2008

Public Meeting of the Finance Committee

8:30 A.M.

Town of Grafton Police Station

Public Meeting

The public meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order at 8:37 P.M.

Finance Committee members present:

Bob Foley, Doris Metivier, Gary Murray, Sue Robbins, Dave Ross

Finance Committee members absent:

Fred Churchill, Don Davison, Sandy Merrill

Citizen comments

Mark Durfee is present to review the efficiency of the Town government and voiced his concern about the deficiencies in Building Department.

In this economy, activity is diminishing and a full time Building Inspector is in place.

It was suggested by the Finance Committee that Mark Durfee review the proposed budget for FY09 in the Board of Selectmen's office.

Town Clerk

Doris Metivier met with the Town Clerk and she is comfortable with the Town Clerk's budget for FY09.

Town Clerk Maureen Clark is absent today because she is sick.

Election and Registration

A special election may be needed in FY09 and it will cost the town an additional \$8,400.

Town Report

The Town Report is listed under "Unclassified" in the amount of \$6,000.

Council on Aging

Council on Aging Director Michelle Drum and several members of the Council on Aging are present to review the proposed FY09 budget.

It was suggested that the Council apply grant funds originally intended for an activities coordinator and apply those funds to hire an additional driver for the bus.

The funding from WRTA is based on a different fiscal year.

The Town pays for one driver.

RECEIVED TOWN CLERK
GRAFTON, MA
2015 DEC 14 AM 10 41

Finance Committee Minutes of March 29, 2008

The WRTA reimburses for another driver. Concerns were expressed that the WRTA is in financial jeopardy and funds may not be available.

Plans were considered to make up the difference.

Budget could be funded for an additional \$4,000.

Transfer in August.

The total budget for the Council on Aging is \$165,229.

Carpet and Upholstery cleaning is \$1,400 and Michelle's budget estimate is \$1,000.

The budget is remaining at \$1,000 for FY09 and will be \$1,400 for FY10.

Elder and Nutrition Services

The Town of Grafton has not donated in two years and the Services program is looking for \$2,500. This is for Meals on Wheels and since there hasn't been a "donation" for this service.....

At the end of the year, the Council on Aging should let the Finance Committee know of any funds that will be turned back that should go to Elder and Nutrition Services.

For FY10, the walk-in refrigerator will need to be resurfaced in the amount of \$2,000 plus...

Safety—Three years in a row the faucet has had to be replumbed. Possibly the Sheriff's office probationary people may be able to work on this project.

Funds for specific purposes will be channeling to the Senior Center in memory of Mrs Elveridge.

Sewer Department

Sue Robbins is recusing herself from this portion of the meeting.

David Therrien and Chuck Bohaboy are present to discuss the Sewer Department.

Transportation is a three year contract and the numbers are fixed and lower.

The capital projects that are coming up will be very pricey.

Certified cash has not been received to date and probably will not be seen until just before May town meeting.

Chuck will ask Cindy Ide for the Town Administrator's recommendation.

Interest from the escrow sewer betterment fund has been going directly to the general fund and it should be going directly to the sewer enterprise fund.

They will talk to Town Accountant Tricia Fay.

Finance Committee Minutes of March 29, 2008

School Committee budget for FY09 review

Sue Robbins called the meeting to order at 11:45 A.M.

Supt. Joe Connors is present. He presented an updated FY09 Budget handout and walked Finance Committee through the details:

- The figures on page 15 are conservative
- The State is predicting a 5.4% increase above the previous year.
- Preschool enrollment figures run throughout the year based on the child's third birthday.
- Out of district needs should remain stable.
- The percentage of students going on to a secondary education has increased. It is now 92%, up from 87%.

A brief discussion took place regarding early intervention and identifying students' needs at an earlier age.

- **Modular Classrooms**

An estimate has been received on modular classrooms but the project has not gone out to bid.

Modular classrooms styles have been visited.

A report will be presented and bid specifications will be prepared by the end of the school year.

Discussion regarding rent vs. lease of the modular classrooms.

The Superintendent is leaning toward purchase.

The time frame or upgrade needed will be determining factors.

The life expectancy of the classrooms is 20 years with proper care.

The bid process will begin over the summer.

Sue Robbins has requested that the Superintendent send the Finance Committee information regarding purchase vs. leasing and cost summary, and reasons why.

- **Enrollment Projections**

Enrollment projection for 2008-2009 is 2,938.

Gary Murray led the discussion on enrollment projections.

If there appears to be discrepancies in the data, it is based on history.

Enrollment projections are based on housing fluctuations—Grafton is still growing and enrollment reflects that.

Taxes are changing, but they are still attractive compared to Westborough, Southborough, and Northborough.

- Master Step 4 is the basis for hiring teachers.
- Concerns over the waste of supplies in the Schools, particularly paper.

Finance Committee Minutes of March 29, 2008

Round Table Discussion

The School Department has been asked to make cuts to their FY09 budget.

Sue Robbins presented a Power Point presentation (see handouts).

School Committee member Donna Stock presented clarification regarding the School budget.

- the impact of cutting budgets vs. the impact of not cutting budgets.
- \$1.2 million was cut

The school budget consists of 80% personnel and 20% other areas

\$883,000.00 will cause many additional cuts to effect core services.

- Administratively the central office cannot be cut
- What does the Municipal have to do?
- Library services reduced
- \$1 million dollars is being taken from Stabilization
- Insurances will be reduced
- Layoffs- suggested by Finance Committee Co-Chair Doris Metivier that all departments who have assistants will have to be layed off.
- The Municipal side of the budget has not added fundamental needs for a number of years.
- Balance the budget

We all need to work together

- Offset measures:
 - User fees
 - Pay As You Throw program
 - Use of facilities fee
 - Override
 - Increasing the co-pay for health insurance

Specific guide lines will need to be introduced to use the fees that are collected.

Override is a one time bump to the budget base.

93% of the funds are coming in from the taxpayer.

Members of the Board of Selectmen Brook Padgett, John Carlson, Chris LeMay and Craig Dauphinais each voiced their concerns and supported the concept of working together to make these difficult decisions.

- Percentages- town vs. school
 - 62.5% of the total dollars belongs to the schools including benefits
 - changing the % of spending

Finance Committee Minutes of March 29, 2008

Health insurance provides the biggest opportunity for saving or shifting of funds.

There is a need for changes in long term patterns of spending.

Supt. Joe Connors does not believe that the total dollars is 62.5%

Cuts can happen but the level of services will change.

Suggestion:

A couple of levels of spending cuts:

200,000

400,000

and review the impacts

The Town Administrator is recommending that the School Department comes in with a budget of \$21,522,935.00 including wages and excluding benefits for FY09.

Three teachers will be retiring.

Instead of cutting positions, we should be looking at contracting future salaries with step increases. Freezing salaries will save positions.

Bottom line cut needed to close the budget deficit for FY09:

\$883,000.00

Raise, lower or cut

X amount of money to spend as a town.

Run the town like a business.

Not acceptable to remove funds from Stabilization

There is not enough funding to handle the level of services that we would like.

Services will need to take a hit.

Town Administrator Natalie Lashmit noted that cuts of \$525,000 were made to the Municipal side of the budget

Historical spending including the benefits.

Assistant Planner Ann Morgan stated that the municipal side positions will be working to create economic growth to the Town

Jennifer O'Neill asked why we aren't applying user fees now if it will save positions. Conserve in order to get it done.

Town Impacts

Work as a Town

Negotiate with a cooperative effort

The Superintendent of Schools and Town Administrator must work together.

Choices need to be made based on the level of impact to the town.

Finance Committee Minutes of March 29, 2008

Date for review of impacts:

April 7, 2008 at 7:00 P.M. at the Municipal Center.

The Town Administrator will encourage suggestions.

- Town Concerns that need to be addressed:

Lake Ripple Dam

Silver Lake

Debt Exclusion- a collective figure

About \$85,000 for addressing the two earthen dams

Fees have been involved as “fines”

One is under fair condition and the other is ready.

FY09

Debt exclusion can be voted on in June along with the school vote.

Possibility: Special Town meeting warrant article to fund FY08

Then a debt exclusion vote for June.

Follette Street water

DEP go together with this Water district issue

Energy items in the budget

This is a large item to oversee and should be looked at in the next fiscal year.

Adjournment:

Motion: Bob Foley moved that the Finance Committee adjourn the public meeting.

Second: Doris Metivier. All in favor. Motion carries.

The public meeting adjourned at 2:53 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Fiacco.